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TOSC Assistance Work Plan - the Sam Winers Motor Site, Akron, Ohio

Assistance Work Plan: The Sam Winer Motors Site

Technical Outreach Services for Communities (TOSC) Program
Project Profile and Work Plan: The Sam Winer Motors Site, Akron, Ohio
June 8, 2001

Summary

In this document, activities to provide technical assistance and educational services to Concerned Citizens Against Illegal Contamination (CCAIC) and other citizens of the Springfield Township community and surrounding areas are described. The assistance is directed at the CCAIC and other residents of Springfield Township. The assistance is designed to supplement assistance provided by other parties, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Ohio EPA. Questions concerning this proposal should be directed to Kirk Riley, TOSC Program Coordinator, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Michigan State University, contact information provided above.

TOSC Program

Located in the Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic Center (GLMAC) for Hazardous Substance Research, the TOSC program promotes citizen involvement in the site cleanup process by providing independent, university-based technical assistance to communities. The program seeks to give citizens the knowledge and resources that they need to effectively participate in decisions that affect their community by holding community educational workshops and providing written materials. The primary areas of focus are environmental engineering and sciences, and toxicology and public health, as those topics relate to contaminated sites.

The TOSC program is funded under a grant from the U.S EPA. The GLMAC is headquartered at the University of Michigan, with additional offices at Michigan State University and Howard University, and serves EPA Regions 3 and 5.

Project Background

Sam Winer Motors, Inc. (SWM) was founded in 1946 as a regional outlet to the military for the storage and distribution of surplus vehicles, parts and equipment. Since that time, SWM has collected and stored used military items on property located around the main building of SWM in Summit County, Ohio. The site under current investigation is one of several parcels of land owned by SWM. Before being purchased by SWM the site served as a truck stop. As noted by the Ohio EPA in the Integrated Assessment (July 2000), former underground storage tanks are believed to have been removed from the

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SWM site. TOSC has been unable to find documentation describing the removal of these tanks. Below is a brief history of important dates and events relevant to the SWM site.

- Sam Winer Motors, Inc., was founded in 1946 as a regional outlet to the military for surplus vehicles, parts and equipment.
- The site was brought to attention of the Ohio EPA by a citizen's complaint in 1993. The complaint alleged the illegal storage of waste solvents in tankers located in one of the vehicle storage facilities. The investigation showed no evidence of solvents in any of the military tankers at the site. The Ohio EPA determined the complaint to be unfounded with no further action to be taken.
- Ohio EPA, Ohio Department of Health, and Summit County Health Department jointly conducted a groundwater investigation in a surrounding area to the east of SWM site on the Bey and Ellen roads in 1993. This investigation was in response to a citizen's complaint. Analytical results of the water indicated that no federal Drinking Water Standards were exceeded.
- The U.S.EPA became involved in the Sam Winer site in 1995 in response to citizen's complaint.
- In 1995, Raab and Haiker of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Water conducted a hydrological investigation in the Bey road area adjacent to the Sam Winer property.
- In March of 1996 U.S EPA's Characterization Research Division in Las Vegas, Nevada produced an aerial photograph interpretation report for the site. Using aerial photographs from 1952 to 1990, this report speculated on various land features of the SWM site. During the 1999 Integrated Assessment investigation, Ohio EPA was unable to field verify many of the conclusions drawn from the interpretation report.
- Ohio EPA personnel conducted an Integrated Assessment at the SWM site, Summit County, Ohio on July 6, 1999.
- July 3, 2000- The Ohio EPA releases the Integrated Assessment (IA) to the U.S. EPA. (U.S. EPA ID# OHD987054376)
- August 2000- The U.S. EPA installed monitoring wells, took soil and groundwater samples as well as sampled some residential wells in an effort to determine if an emergency removal action is necessary. The completion of this investigation is expected during summer 2001.

Community information

Summit County is located southeast of the City of Akron, Ohio. Summit County has a population of approximately 530,000 people. In the area immediately surrounding the site of contamination residents rely on private wells for their source of drinking water and have septic systems. Sam Winer Motors, Inc. owns multiple parcels of land within the immediate area and has an economic influence within community and surrounding area. The main office of Sam Winer Motors, Inc. is located at 3417 East Waterloo Road in Summit County in northeastern Ohio.

Mary Trent on behalf of Concerned Citizens Against Illegal Contamination (CCAIC) made the initial request for TOSC assistance. The request for

assistance focused on concerns related to environmental contamination and possible mishandling of hazardous waste at the Goodyear Wingfoot Fuel Cell Test Facility, as well as contamination found at the SWM site. Individuals outside the CCAIC have also shown interest in TOSC assistance.

On June 13, 2000 Michael Lang and Shawn McElmurry met with Mary Trent and a group of citizens from CCAIC. At the CCAIC meeting, Michael Lang provided an overview of TOSC and the CCAIC members requested TOSC assistance. The next day, TOSC personnel met separately with Mike Bolas from the Ohio EPA, Division of Emergency & Remedial Response (DERR). Since those meetings TOSC has talked with Carla Auker, U.S. EPA; Bill Batin, Ohio EPA, DERR; Vicki Deppisch, Ohio EPA, DERR; as well as others from the community and government.

On December 7, 2000, TOSC and local residents hosted an open community meeting concerning the contamination found at the SWM site. The meeting gave residents an opportunity to discuss firsthand the type of assistance that TOSC provides, and to express to TOSC their questions and concerns over the contamination. TOSC project staff in attendance included Project Leader Dr. Susan Masten, Associate Professor of Environmental Engineering at Michigan State, and Kirk Riley, Shawn McElmurry and Atiq Syed. More than 60 members of the community asked questions, raised concerns and helped to define the scope of TOSC assistance.

The listing of community concerns found later in this document is based on comments made at those meetings, along with newspaper accounts and telephone conversations.

Community concerns

Health Risks

From our discussions with residents, health risks are the most pressing concern to the residents living near the SWM site. TOSC has received numerous complaints about health problems that citizens suspect to be the result of environmental pollution. Some residents from around the Bey Road area have complained of poor drinking water quality and suspected drinking water contamination. Residents have expressed concern over possible contamination of fruits and vegetables grown in private gardens. Dust from the recent installation of sanitary sewer and municipal drinking water supply has raised concern over potential exposures. Many of the citizens want to know if breathing and touching the dust is safe.

Community access to information; regulatory process

The residents who live near the SWM property have experienced environmental contamination in the past. The most notable past episode was the groundwater contamination at the Goodyear Wingfoot Fuel Cell Test Facility in the late 1980's to mid 1990's. That resulted in the removal of a 10,000-gallon underground storage tank from the Goodyear property.

There is a general mistrust by the community of SWM, Inc., as well as some

mistrust directed at local, state and federal government. General skepticism appears to exist among residents over whether a site that is determined to be "clean" is safe for the community. This general suspicion is intensified by residents' perceived difficulty in obtaining information and clear understanding of the issues surrounding sites of suspected environmental contamination. Some of the specific questions expressed at the December 7 meeting are listed below.

- Are residential wells contaminated?
- Do I need to get my well tested?
- Who is responsible?
- How does a residence receive city water?
- I saw extensive dumping of chemicals on the site. How has this affected my health?

Other questions and comments pertain to opportunities for public involvement in the cleanup process and the ability of "ordinary citizens" to influence the decision-making process. Citizens state that the complexity of the site and the volume of data are impediments to their understanding and involvement. They would like to have a clear understanding of the specific points in the process where state or federal regulations provide the opportunity for public involvement. They would like a clear understanding of the role of the U.S. EPA and other federal agencies, including the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), which conduct public health assessments at contaminated sites.

Site investigation and clean up

Residents have asked for information explaining the process for investigating the site and selecting a remedy or remedies, and the specific criteria for evaluating remedy options. Citizens familiar with the site want to make sure the site is appropriately characterized. The community has raised concerns that the scope of the current investigation is too small and that the former gasoline station is not the only site within the immediate area with contamination. Concerns over the amount of time the site investigation and clean up process take have also been voiced. Some of the other questions presented to TOSC by community members are listed below.

- What is the direction of groundwater and surface water flow?
- Why was groundwater testing not done at the SWM landfill?
- Are the high levels of lead in ground water natural?
- Do the U.S. EPA and Ohio EPA have sufficient funding to carry out an appropriate investigation?
- Are the U.S. and Ohio EPA testing for the correct chemicals?
- Why has no testing been performed on the north side of U.S. 224?
- Will municipal water solve the resident's drinking water supply dilemma and will the community be able to afford municipal water?
- If there is contaminated groundwater, can it be cleaned up?

Environmental Impact

The environmental impacts to the surrounding area are of concern. The primary

environmental concerns expressed by residents are over potential impacts to their drinking water and the community's health in general. One question raised at the December 7th meeting was, "Is the produce from private gardens safe for consumption?" Residents' concerns over the environment tend to relate to how environmental degradation may lead to health or economic impacts. Concerns over ecological impacts are secondary to concerns over human health risks.

Technical assistance and education to address community needs

The TOSC program proposes to review the current investigation of at the Sam Winer Motors site and hold informational workshops to address some or all of the community questions and concerns described above. In submitting this proposal, we are seeking to develop a partnership with interested citizens to investigate these issues. As part of that partnership, we seek community assistance with disseminating information, providing notice of and organizing public meetings and defining the issues that TOSC might address. Throughout the project we are seeking to bolster the community's ability to understand key issues and participate in the cleanup process.

TOSC will provide a review of and comment on certain technical documents, as well as hold workshops to discuss critical concepts associated with the site. There have been numerous requests for TOSC to address site-related issues, and any review will focus on specific documents because they represent a public record of the site. TOSC will limit its review and assistance to community concerns and will not address individual health problems. The effects on personal health due to exposure to certain types of chemicals found on site or released from the site may be covered.

This Workplan represents an initial statement of TOSC activities to address citizen concerns, and may be modified or added to as the project proceeds. At the request of Akron-area citizens, TOSC will review and comment on the current investigation at the Sam Winer Motors Site being performed by the U.S. EPA as well as previous investigations by the Ohio EPA. Dr. Susan Masten, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Michigan State University, will serve as lead technical consultant for the review.

The following activities are suggested by TOSC to address the concerns of citizens within Springfield Township and the surrounding areas. In carrying out these activities, TOSC will seek to actively "partner" with other educational resources within the surrounding area.

1. Conduct a community-wide educational workshop, or series of workshops, which will build citizen understanding of the site characterization work and human health risk assessment.

Many of the questions that TOSC has received reflect a need to understand the site conditions more completely. Citizens have expressed difficulty understanding the technical documents and want TOSC assistance in "interpreting" them. Reaching a better understanding will allow citizens to participate in formulating decisions about the cleanup of the site.

no authority over site-cleanup decisions. While TOSC will directly address residents' concerns and questions, TOSC will do so as a neutral party and not act as an advocate for any individual or group.

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Contact us for any comments, questions or suggestions.